

Statement of Charles Barclay
President, American Association of Airport Executives
On Behalf Of
The American Association of Airport Executives
And
Airports Council International-North America
Before the Senate Commerce Committee
Transportation Security Administration Aviation Passenger Pre-Screening Programs
February 9, 2006

Thank you for the opportunity to share with the Committee the views of the airport community on Transportation Security Administration aviation passenger pre-screening programs, including the Registered Traveler and Secure Flight programs. I am testifying today on behalf of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), Airports Council International – North America (ACI-NA), and our Airport Legislative Alliance, a joint legislative advocacy organization. AAAE represents the men and women who manage primary, commercial service, reliever, and general aviation airports. ACI-NA represents local, regional and state governing bodies that own and operate commercial airports in the United States and Canada.

Registered Traveler, Secure Flight Effectively Focus Limited Resources on Greatest Risk

Let me begin, Chairman Stevens and Co-Chairman Inouye, by thanking you for your continued focus on the operations and priorities of the TSA. The programs the Committee has selected to examine today in the area of passenger pre-screening hold enormous potential in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of security screening operations at airports across the country. With aviation traffic returning to record levels and with federal resources becoming ever scarcer, it is imperative that we get the most out of every dollar we devote to security. Utilizing better technology – such as Registered Traveler and Secure Flight – to effectively manage risk results in better security and a more efficient use of federal and industry investments.

In our view, one of the key components to improving passenger screening is shifting the focus from finding dangerous “things” to finding dangerous “people.” The most important weapon that the 19 terrorists had on September 11 wasn’t box cutters; it was knowledge – knowledge of our aviation system and existing security protocols, which they used to their advantage. We simply must do more to identify potential threats. Secure Flight offers opportunity in that regard, although we recognize that it must be pursued with careful consideration provided to a full range of individual privacy issues.

Additionally, we must quickly take advantage of the opportunity that exists through deployment of a Registered Traveler program to more effectively calibrate the resource allocation at airport screening checkpoints. With more than 700 million passengers traveling through the U.S. aviation system each year – a number that is anticipated to grow to more than one billion annually within the next decade – we simply must take a better approach to security screening. Relatively few passengers make up the overwhelming majority of all travel, and we should make every effort to provide a different screening protocol for this group of travelers. Doing so will

help expedite the screening process for all travelers and allow screeners to focus more intensely on unknown and potential threats.

Our challenge with regard to passenger screening remains to find the proverbial needle in the haystack. Registered Traveler can help reduce the size of the haystack, and Secure Flight can help ensure that more resources are devoted to finding the needle. Both goals are important, and both programs deserve the continued support of Congress and the TSA.

Along those lines, we are extremely encouraged by the leadership that Department of Homeland Security Assistant Secretary Kip Hawley has provided since taking over the helm of TSA and believe that he deserves a great deal of credit for recognizing the promise of these programs and for working to expedite their implementation. On Registered Traveler, in particular, Administrator Hawley has moved the program past the “pilot” program phase and announced a timeline for making a nationwide, interoperable program a reality by this summer. It is our sincere hope and expectation that the announced timelines will be met, and we look forward to continuing our work with TSA and the Congress to ensure that is the case.

Public/Private Partnerships Have Proven Effective and Should Be Further Utilized

While the federal government obviously plays a leading role with regard to passenger pre-screening and other areas of aviation security, airports and the aviation industry can and should play an active role in partnering with the federal government to design and implement meaningful solutions to security challenges. The establishment of effective public/private partnerships has already proven extremely successful, for example, in building a system for processing fingerprint-based background checks and additional background screening for more than 1.9 million airport and airline employees through the Transportation Security Clearinghouse. We believe that the public/private model offers one possible solution in the areas under discussion today.

On the Registered Traveler front as I will discuss in more detail, the representatives of the airport community and its aviation partners have proposed a public/private model that will be both interoperable and innovative. Undoubtedly, the best path forward is one in which federal resources and standards are combined with the knowledge, expertise and creativity of airports, airlines and aviation-oriented businesses.

Secure Flight Is Critical Tool in Identifying Dangerous People

While the majority of my comments today are focused on Registered Traveler, I would like to highlight the critical nature of the Secure Flight program and to urge the Committee’s continued support. While there are critical privacy issues that must be addressed, it is indisputable that the more we know about individuals traveling through the aviation system, the more secure it will be. In today’s high-threat world, we must all recognize that the Constitutional right to privacy that we enjoy as Americans does not provide a right to anonymity.

Knowledge is power and the more we know about potential threats before they have a chance to proceed to a security checkpoint or board a plane, the better off we all will be. Secure Flight adds yet another critical layer of security to the system and ensures that we don’t rely solely on physical screening to identify those who seek to do us harm. Once privacy protections are

ensured, the federal government can and should move forward with Secure Flight as soon as possible.

Registered Traveler Program Will Improve Security and Efficiency at Airports

Before discussing some of the specific efforts of airports to partner with TSA in making Registered Traveler a reality, it is important to highlight again the value of a nationwide program and to remind the Committee of the strong endorsement the concept received from the 9/11 Commission and numerous others. In an era of risk management, limited federal resources must be focused on known and unknown risks to the aviation system. Registered Traveler accomplishes that goal by helping TSA to better align screeners and resources with potential risks.

Given existing traffic levels and anticipated system growth over the next decade, we simply must take a smarter approach to passenger screening. Today's personnel-dependent screening system is already being pushed to the brink. One can only imagine what the situation will become as 300 million or more additional passengers are added to the system.

While a nationwide Registered Traveler Program will be open to all whom are eligible, there is no doubt that the frequent fliers who make up the overwhelming majority of all travel will be the ones most likely to enroll. By providing a different screening protocol for this group of registered and scrutinized travelers – which we believe is a critical component of the program moving forward – TSA will be able to better target security resources, expedite processing for all passengers and reduce the passenger “hassle factor.”

We have learned a great deal from the recently concluded Registered Traveler pilot programs that involved five airports partnering with a single air carrier at each airport. Although the original TSA pilot programs were popular with participants, they were not interoperable by design, which limited benefits to only one air carrier at each of the five original airports. Additionally, participants largely were subjected to the exact same security protocol – the removal of laptops, shoes, and coats were still required, for example – as non-participants, meaning that the only real benefit was being moved to a shorter screening line with limited secondary screening.

Moving forward, it is clear that in order to realize the true potential of Registered Traveler, the program must be ***nationwide and interoperable***. Participants who sign up in Phoenix, in other words, must be recognized and accepted as they travel to other airports that have chosen to participate in the program, be it Denver, Atlanta, Washington or other airports throughout the aviation system. Additionally, security screening protocols should be adjusted for program participants in recognition of the extensive background vetting they have received. Passengers who are willing to provide substantial background information and undergo government security threat assessments should be accommodated with tangible screening benefits, such as non-divestiture of shoes, outer garments and laptops.

As TSA proceeds with implementation of the Registered Traveler program, it is also important to note several potential pitfalls that the federal government must work to avoid. First, Registered Traveler cannot be viewed within DHS and the federal government as simply a way to save

money or to compensate for insufficient screening resources. At its core, Registered Traveler is a security-based program that will augment other screening efforts and better focus resources. It cannot be used as an excuse to shortchange other screening needs. To that end, we again call on TSA to issue and publish performance standards for security screening that apply to all screening locations.

Additionally, the federal government must ensure that all data collected in conjunction with Registered Traveler is fully secure. TSA needs robust safeguards to protect proprietary data it will collect through the program's implementation. Such assurances are critical to ensure participation by the traveling public. Potential Registered Traveler program participants have a right to expect that these issues will be addressed before implementation just as all individuals have a right to expect that privacy issues will be addressed before Secure Flight becomes operational.

Finally, all fees associated with program participation must be transparent, cost-based, and kept to a minimum. The cost component is critical if we expect this voluntary program to work as promised.

Airport Registered Traveler Interoperability Consortium (RTIC)

As I now turn to the Registered Traveler Interoperability Consortium (RTIC), I would note that ACI-NA is not a party to the RTIC process. As such, the following comments on the consortium reflect only those of AAAP and are specific to the 70 airports and 40 service providers that participated in the RTIC process.

Airports, in light of their public nature and responsibilities to the communities they serve, remain eager to partner with the TSA to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the security screening process. In recognition of the promise that Registered Traveler in particular holds in achieving these goals, airport professionals have been working diligently to move forward operationally with the program. The RTIC represents one voluntary initiative focused on that goal.

The RTIC is a group of more than 70 airports and 40 service providers that have worked for the past six months to define and establish the mutual and common business practices and technical standards that will complement federal standards and help push forward a national program. RTIC represents a significant attempt by a large group in the airport community to partner with TSA in making the promise of RT a reality as quickly as possible.

The goal of the RTIC has been to develop a common set of business processes and technical rules on an open, secure and industry-driven network among airports that will create a fair and seamless platform for airports, airlines and vendors to interface with DHS and each other. Rather than pre-ordaining any one proprietary system, this open-architecture approach ensures that airports have an opportunity to work with any number of technologies or vendors to design a system that works best at their facility. This approach also ensures that the creativity and competition of the private sector is unleashed to better serve local needs and to keep program costs in check.

Current airport members of the RTIC include the following arranged by size (enplanements) based on calendar year 2004 data:

Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport	Des Moines International Airport
Denver International Airport	McGhee Tyson Airport
Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport	Wichita Mid-Continent Airport
John F. Kennedy International Airport	Palm Springs International Airport
Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport	Tallahassee Regional Airport
George Bush Intercontinental/Houston Airport	Huntsville International-Carl T. Jones Field
Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport	Lexington Blue Grass Airport
Newark Liberty International Airport	Atlantic City International Airport
Orlando International Airport	Northwest Arkansas Regional Airport
Miami International Airport	Newport News/Williamsburg Int'l Airport
Seattle-Tacoma International Airport	Santa Barbara Municipal Airport
Philadelphia International	Fort Wayne International Airport
Boston Logan International Airport	Daytona Beach International Airport
New York La Guardia	Roanoke Regional/Woodrum Field
Washington Dulles International Airport	Bangor International
Baltimore-Washington International Airport	Yeager Airport
Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport	Wilmington International
Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport	Chattanooga Lovell Field
Pittsburgh International Airport	Kalamazoo/Battle Creek International Airport
Lambert-St. Louis International Airport	Jackson Hole Airport
Memphis International Airport	Cherry Capital Traverse City Airport
Nashville International Airport	Monterey Peninsula Airport
William P. Hobby Airport	Lafayette Regional Airport
Austin-Bergstrom International Airport	Redmond Roberts Field Airport
Palm Beach International Airport	Grand Forks International Airport
General Mitchell International Airport	Waco Regional Airport
Port Columbus International Airport	Redding Municipal Airport
T.F. Green State Airport	Greater Rockford Airport
Reno/Tahoe International Airport	St. George Municipal Airport
Ted Stevens Anchorage International Airport	Flagstaff Pulliam Airport
Manchester Airport	Barkley Regional Airport
Tucson International Airport	Tupelo Regional Airport
Louisville International-Standiford Field	Pullman/Moscow Regional Airport
Albany International Airport	Mid-Ohio Valley Regional
Lihue Airport	Shenandoah Valley Regional Airport
Gerald R. Ford International	Dickinson-Theodore Roosevelt Regional Airport

For the past six months, members of the RTIC have been working diligently to establish and agree on common core principles that will enable technical interoperability across a broad and varied airport network. In comments filed with TSA in late January in response to the agency's Request for Information on the Registered Traveler program, RTIC and its Service Provider Council provided a detailed series of agreed upon financial standards, technical interoperability standards and common business processes for the program.

These recommendations provide a consensus framework for rapid, secure, and seamless deployment of a Registered Traveler program at the nation's airports that will result in enhanced security and quicker security processing. It is our hope that these consensus recommendations will be adopted by TSA as the agency moves forward with program implementation.

While we would be happy to offer the Committee details on the RTIC filing with TSA, we wanted to simply summarize those efforts here. With regard to common business processes, the RTIC has identified each of the key players in a national, interoperable RT program – enrollment service providers, verification service providers, the Registered Traveler Management System, TSA, applicant and participant – and detailed the potential roles and responsibilities of each. On technical operability, the RTIC has made specific technical recommendations on system messaging, ensuring a chain of trust, optimizing the use of biometrics, leveraging appropriate token technologies, ensuring system security, protecting privacy, and ensuring cross-provider interoperability. In the area of financial standards, RTIC has proposed a simplistic and straight-forward approach to enabling the maximum flexibility and competition for solutions for both enrollment and verification service providers.

The RTIC is committed to working closely with TSA to meet the timeline established by the agency and its pledge to: use a public-private partnership model, build off of existing security networks through utilization of the Transportation Security Clearinghouse, establish a sustainable, biometrically enabled and interoperable system, and establish a program where travelers will receive screening benefits through in-depth background checks.

By establishing a sustainable and cost-driven approach in partnership with TSA, airports can help ensure a Registered Traveler program that focuses on enhanced security above all else in addition to expediting the travel experience. These two pillars are the primary values that the nation's frequent air travelers want and that each of you as policymakers rightly will demand. By bringing efficiency back into the nation's airport screening checkpoints, TSA screeners will be able to better focus their limited resources on the critical task of providing more rigorous screening to individuals about whom we know less than those who have voluntarily submitted their background for extensive vetting and clearance.

As frequent travelers, each member of this Committee knows that every airport is unique. A successful, long-term Registered Traveler Program depends on the implementation of a technical, operational and business model capable of supporting individual airport needs, while providing the common infrastructure that allows passengers to use this capability at any airport nationwide. In recognition of that fact, it is critical that a permanent Registered Traveler Program be airport-driven and run largely outside of government with careful and consistent government background checks, standards and oversight.

Mr. Chairman, more than four years after the tragic events of September 11, we still have a great deal of work to accomplish in transforming the existing personnel-dependent screening system into the system of the future. In an era dramatically increasing demands on our nation's air transportation system, it is critical that we move forward as quickly as possible with promising technology like Secure Flight and Registered Traveler. Airports and the aviation industry have a key role to play in working with the federal government, and we are pleased to report great

progress in that regard. It is our sincere hope and expectation that the federal government will continue to fulfill its responsibilities so that these programs can become a reality in the very near future.

Again, we appreciate the leadership of this Committee and the opportunity to testify today.